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INFO RUEHZJ/HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT PASS TO NEA/ARP (HARRIS, BLONG), DRL/IRF (GOMBIS)

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: THE DILEMMA OF HADI AL-MUTIF

REF: A. 08 RIYADH 1748

[1](#)B. 06 RIYADH 8808

Classified By: DMC David Rundell for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

(C) Key Points

-- Hadi al-Mutif, an Ismaili Shi'a convicted in 1996 of blasphemy, remains in prison. His original sentence of execution was stayed by the late King Fahd. King Abdullah has left the stay in place.

-- Sources indicate al-Mutif is held in a Ministry of Interior facility in Abha, southwestern Saudi Arabia. Authorities allegedly moved him there for his own protection following past suicide attempts.

-- In December 2008, Political Counselor raised al-Mutif's case with Saudi Human Rights Commission (HRC) President Turki al-Sudairy, who said there is no legal remedy for al-Mutif short of a royal pardon.

(C) Comment

The King pardoned several other Ismaili prisoners in 2006 - but not al-Mutif. We do not know why al-Mutif was not included in the pardons, which appeared designed to placate the Ismaili Shi'a community in Najran. One theory is that Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz opposes the pardon (Reftel B). A second theory is that Sheikh Saleh al-Luhaidan, a powerful religious figure and head of the Supreme Judicial Council, Saudi's highest court, opposes the pardon, and that the King does not want to challenge the religious hierarchy on this particular issue. If either theory is true, then raising the issue with the King would be unlikely to achieve results on al-Mutif's behalf.

End key points and comment.

BACKGROUND

[1](#)1. (C) Hadi al-Mutif's blasphemy conviction was reportedly based on an accusation he told a joke that insulted the Prophet Mohammed. Blasphemy is a capital offense under Saudi Islamic law (Shari'ah).

[1](#)2. (C) Sources inform Post that al-Mutif has been held in a type of "limited" solitary confinement, not for punishment but more for his safety. His brother is rumored to have visited him in November. The head of the Saudi Human Rights Commission, Turki al-Sudairy, has reportedly raised al-Mutif's case with the King and with the head of Saudi Arabia's Supreme Judicial Council, Sheikh Saleh al-Luhaidan.

But, in his December meeting with PolCouns, al-Sudairy appeared resigned to the fact that there were limited options for al-Mutif. He described al-Mutif's case as "a legal problem" with no straightforward solution. Al-Sudairy offered no strategy, but noted that another individual who had committed "the same offense" had been pardoned and released, but not al-Mutif.

RUNDELL